

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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PASS USDA/FAS/FCA/US-USSR SECRETARIAT/ERS/SCHOONOVER

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH AGRICULTURE MINISTER MESYATS

REF: STATE 186673

1. AMBASSADOR, ACCOMPANIED BY AGATTACHE, PAID COURTESY CALL ON AGRICULTURE MINISTER MESYATS AUGUST 9. IN CONVERSATION LASTING ABOUT ONE HOUR, AMB DISCUSSED POSSIBLE VISIT TO USSR BY SECY BERGLAND NEXT SPRING, UPCOMING JOINT COMMITTEE MEETINGS, AND US-SOVIET HARVEST ESTIMATES. KBLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS:

2. AMBASSADOR TOLD MESYATS THAT AT JUNE MEETING WITH BERGLAND IN WASHINGTON, THE SECRETARY HAD INDICATED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO VISIT THE SOVIET UNION, PROBABLY NEXT YEAR. SECRETARY HAD CONCURRED IN AMBASSADOR'S SUGGESTION THAT APPROPRIATE TIME WOULD BE DURING THE "AGRICULTURE USA" EXHIBIT NEXT SPRING. MESYATS WAS UNAWARE OF EXHIBIT PLANS, BUT ASSURED AMBASSADOR OF SOVIET SUPPORT, AND SAID SOVS WOULD WELCOME A VISIT BY SECRETARY BERGLAND NEXT SPRING, PREFEREABLY AFTER MARCH BECAUSE OF CLIMATIC CONDITIONS.

3. REGARDING AGREEMENT, AMBASSADOR SAID WE WERE SATISFIED WITH PRO-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GRESS UNDER AGREEMENT, ALTHOUGH WE--INCLUDING USDA--WERE CONCERNED ABOUT TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS PLACED ON SOME OF OUR TEAMS, E.G., SPRING GRAINS TEAM. MESYATS SAID SOVIET SIDE WAS ALSO GENERALLY PLEASED WITH AGREEMENT. WHILE HE ADMITTED IT WAS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE ACCEDE TO ALL VISIT REQUESTS, HE FELT THAT GENERALLY OUR EXPERTS HAD BEEN PERMITTED VISIT MOST SIGNIFICANT AGRICULTURAL AREAS. HE ADDED THAT IT WOULD BE REGRETTABLE IF U.S. "INSPECTION TEAMS"

WERE TO SPOIL THE GENERALLY POSITIVE ASPECTS OF OUR JOINT COOPERATION.

4. SOVIETS SAID DATES FOR WORKING GROUP (NOV. 29-DEC. 2) WERE ACCEPTABLE, BUT THAT PROPOSED DATES FOR JOINT COMMITTEE MEETINGS FELL ON SOVIET HOLIDAY (DEC. 5 - CONSTITUTION DAY). AMBASSADOR SAID MEETING COULD NO DOUBT BE ADJUSTED SLIGHTLY TO ACCOMMODATE THIS PROBLEM.

5. AGATT EXPLAINED USDA VIEW THAT BECAUSE OF IMPORTANCE OF SOVIET AGRICULTURE AND CROPS TO WORLD MARKET, ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND INFORMATION RESPONSIBILITIES ARE VITAL ASPECTS OF AGREEMENT, AND THE USE OF SURVEY TEAMS ON SOVIET CROP CONDITIONS ESSENTIAL TO MEETING THESE RESPONSIBILITIES. HE ALSO REFERRED TO THE USDA PROPOSAL TO SOVIET SIDE FOR A JOINT PROJECT IN CROP FORECASTING AND EXPRESSED HOPE SOVUUWOULD FIND IT ACCEPTABLE.

6. IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S QUESTIONS ABOUT CURRENT GRAIN CROP OUTLOOK, MESYATS SAID IT WAS TOO EARLY TO BE DEFINITNVE BUT THAT WINTER GRAINS PRODUCTION WOULD BE "RECORD". WHEN PRESSED BY AMBASSADOR, MESYATS BACKED OFF FROM "RECORD" PREDICTION DESCRIBED DIFFICULTIES FACING HARVEST AND SAID ONLY THAT IT WOULD BE A "VERY GOOD CROP".TSWHEN ASKED SPECIFICIALLY ABOUT HARVESTING LOSSES, HE SUGGESTED THAT THEY WERE NOT LARGE, BUT THAT IF WEATHER HAD BEEN BETTER, FIELDS WHICH YIELD 40 QUINTALS/HECTARES MIGHT

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HAVE YIELDED 42 (IMPLYING LOSSES OF ABOUT 5 PERCENT). MESYATS STATED THAT MOLDAVIA HAD A RECORD CROP AND OUTPUT IN NORTH CAUCASUS WAS VERY GOOD.

7. AMBASSADOR ADVISED MESYATS OF HIGH LEVEL JULY 12 ESTIMATES FOR U.S. GRAIN CROP AND SOYBEAN AVAILABILITY. IT WAS ALSO NOTED THAT AUGUST CROP FORECAST WILL PROBABLY BE LOWER DUE TO DROUGHT IN SEVERAL IMPORTANT PRODUCING AREAS.

8. AMBASSADOR ASKED MESYATS IF HE HAD SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING COOPERATION UNDER AGREEMENT. MESYATS REPLIED THAT THERE IS ALREADY ADEQUATE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION, BUT THAT THERE MUST BE GREATER EXCHANGE OF RESEARCHERS AND SCIENTISTS. HE NOTED THAT IN SOME AREAS, E.G., COTTON, SOVIETS HAVE MUCH TO OFFER, WHILE IN OTHER AREAS, E.G., SOYBEANS, U.S. IS LEADER.

9. IN PARTIAL RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S QUESTION ON SOVIET SOY-BEAN OUTLOOK, MESYATS WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT RAPID EXPANSION OF SOVIET PRODUCTION DUE CLIMATIC PROBLEMS. WHILE SOWN AREA IS BEING EXPANDED, HE SAID, MOSTLY ON IRRIGATED TRACTS, NO TARGET HAS BEEN FIXED FOR 1980. HE DID NOT REPLY TO AMBASSADOR'S QUESTION ON SIZE OF 1977 CROP. (EMBASSY ESTI-

MATE IS IN 500-700,000 TON RANGE.) MESYATS ALSO MENTIONED
THE HIGH POTENTIAL OF LUPINE AS A VEGETABLE PROTEIN SOURCE.

10. THE MINISTER SAID 1976 SOVIET COTTON PRODUCTION WAS 8.3
MILLION TONS, AND THAT 1977 PRODUCTION WOULD BE NO LESS.
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